

# Consultation on National Policy Statements

## Gas Supply Infrastructure, Gas and Oil Pipelines



### What is Planning Aid?

Planning Aid offers people the opportunity to get involved in the development of their local areas. We provide free and independent professional planning advice to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. We work with communities to help them understand and play a role in the planning process. We are an independent source of advice and information on planning issues, not part of central or local government.

### The new planning process for nationally significant infrastructure

The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new planning system for applications to build nationally significant infrastructure facilities in England and Wales. The new system covers applications for major energy generation, railways, ports, major roads, airports and water and waste infrastructure. Under the new system, national policy on infrastructure will be set out in a series of new National Policy Statements (NPS) which can be reviewed by the Secretary of State if there is a change in circumstances. A new independent body, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), will examine and decide applications for new infrastructure development, using the criteria on national need, benefits and impacts set out in the NPS, and consideration of evidence put forward on potential local effects.

### Why should I get involved in the debate on National Policy Statements?

In autumn 2009 the Government published the first set of draft National Policy Statements (NPS) for public consultation. It is important to make your views known because once finalised the NPS will provide the framework for future decisions by the IPC on individual applications. Issues relating to the need for a specific type of infrastructure development will not be debated again. Each NPS will be accompanied by an Appraisal of Sustainability on which comments are also invited. Except for the NPS on nuclear power stations and airports, specific locations for infrastructure are not identified although criteria may guide developers to appropriate types of area.

## Gas and Oil Pipelines

This NPS covers large underground gas storage and liquid natural gas facilities; large gas reception facilities; gas transporter pipelines conveying gas to at least 50,000 potential customers; and oil and gas cross country pipelines, over 10 miles in length.

In England the IPC will decide all relevant applications, but in Wales only certain applications will fall to the IPC and in Scotland this will only include cross border oil and gas pipeline applications. Offshore gas storage, infrastructure

and pipelines, will be determined by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

The Overarching Energy Policy NPS (see separate leaflet) sets out the national need for the different types of energy infrastructure required over the next 10 – 15 years if the nation is to be able to reduce emissions, ensure security of energy supply, expand grid capacity, keep costs down and contribute to sustainable development. It also sets out five key principles which will guide the IPC when deciding applications, these are:

- If the development contributes to meeting the need and is in accordance with the NPS, then consent should be given;

- Regard should had to local impact reports (produced by local authorities) and other matters considered relevant and important;
- National, regional and local benefits (environmental, social and economic) should be taken account of;
- Adverse impacts should be considered, longer term and cumulative impacts and proposed mitigation; and
- If the IPC considers that the adverse impacts (after mitigation) outweigh the benefits, then consent should be refused.

In the event of a conflict with existing planning policy, the NPS will be followed. The Overarching Energy Policy NPS must be read together with this technology specific NPS.

This NPS then sets out technology related criteria, some of which are general and some are relevant to specific infrastructure. General criteria include:

- Climate Change Adaptation – the impact of coastal change and storm surge, higher temperatures, increased earth movement or subsidence as a result of flooding or drought need.
- Good design principles should be followed.
- Noise and vibration — impacts from construction and operation will need to be mitigated.

Specific criteria include:

- Underground Natural Gas Storage - gas needs to be stored where it can enter the transmission system quickly at times of high demand, and where longer term storage can take place. Porous rocks in a depleted or partially depleted oil or gas field, salt caverns and aquifers offer suitable locations. The main areas where thick natural layers of salt are found are in northern England, with smaller areas further south. Specific criteria relate to water quality and resources – in a salt cavern water abstraction and disposal of brine will require to be addressed.
- Liquid Natural Gas Import Facilities - these are major installations, which need to be located on the coast away



from areas of habitation, where tanker unloading facilities including a deepwater jetty, large storage tanks and regasification plant can be accommodated. Specific criteria include the impact of dredging on designated marine and coastal habitats, protected species, the water environment, coastal processes and geomorphology which will need to be considered, together with the need to mitigate visual impacts.

- Gas Reception Facilities – these receive and process gas to a form in which it can be used in domestic appliances. They need to be linked to the on shore and off shore gas supply infrastructure.
- Gas and Oil Pipelines – these networks link import facilities, refineries, storage and distribution facilities. Where possible the proposed route should avoid impacts on National Parks or AONBs. Elsewhere the character of the landscape should be taken into account and mitigation provided. Impacts on ground water and will need to be mitigated and the suitability of the geology for gas storage considered.

Further information on the consultation process, the questions on which comments are sought, related events, the draft NPS and the supporting documentation is available on the Department for Energy and Climate Change website [www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk](http://www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk). Welsh language, Braille and large print copies are available on request. Responses can be submitted online, by letter, fax or email. The consultation will close on 22 February 2010.



### Contact Details

You can call the Planning Aid NPS advice line for independent advice. Initially advice will be given to all. If your enquiry is more complex and meets our eligibility criteria, you will be assisted by a qualified planning advisor or volunteer. If you can afford to pay, you will be referred to a planning consultant.

**Planning Aid** on 0121 214 2915 or [www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

**Planning Aid for London** on 020 7247 4900 or [www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk](http://www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk)

**Planning Aid for Wales** on 02920 485765 or [www.planningaidwales.org.uk](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk)

Planning Aid is part of the Royal Town Planning Institute, a charity registered in England 262865 and Scotland SC 037841. Head office: Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL.

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